There was a Crisis in Victoria with

NO PAY for POLICE

The articles in this continuing series are based upon editorials and news reports in early issues of The British Colonist, antecedent of today's daily newspaper, publication of which has been uninterrupted for more than a century. The aim is to shed light upon the problems of the growing colonies of Vancouver's Island and British Columbia, of Victoria in particular, and to indicate trends and effects of events.

THE BRITISH COLONIST frequently expressed disapproval, disappointment and disgust with policies and principles of the government of early days. It was supposed to be representative government; with a legislative council and an elected legislative assembly, but Governor James Douglas was reluctant to surrender any of the powers originally conferred upon him by the Colonial Office in London. It was over his insistence upon government by proclamation that The British Colonist took issue with him most violently. But there were other, lesser failures in administrative machinery which called for outspoken criticism.

For example, at the end of January, 1860, Victoria's little police force had once again found the treasury unable to pay wages; wages, by the way, so meagre that the most assiduous economies were necessary just to pay the grocer's bill.

It is hardly surprising that the policemen threatened to strike.

Now in those days a strike was an uncommonly drastic departure. In Victoria it was unprecedented. And for the police, of all people, to flaunt custom and stoop to such a method of gaining redress might have been expected to raise the wrath of the colonists. It didn't.

Colonists were well aware that the Victoria policemen had been treated very shabbily. The policemen themselves, a very efficient force, as a matter of fact, were exasperated by the government's attitude. This wasn't the first time they had to wait for their pittance. So they put the hard word to the government.

The British Colonist was unusually mild in its comment: "It is really too bad that these men are not paid regularly. The government should bear in mind that policemen are human after all, and require as much to put shoes on their children's feet as ourselves. There must be something going on behind the scenes that outsiders cannot discern —else why this heartless refusal to pay wages so well earned? Cannot something be done to relieve their necessities?"

Make no mistake about it, the policemen had no sinecure. At the time of this particular crisis there were 23 persons in jail, either serving their sentences or awaiting trial; there were seven out on bail, and three persons known as "lodgers."

One of the "lodgers" was John Butts, who had been acquitted of a charge of a statutory nature, and under the heading "Lying Low," the British Colonist observed: "John Butts, notwithstanding his acquittal, has signified his intention of receiving visitors at the city prison a few days longer."

There was no lack of police business. For instance, on Feb. 17 a constable making his rounds discovered a fire in a tailor's shop on Johnson Street, two doors above Waddington Alley. The premises were occupied by two partners, Mitchelt and Moser.

The officer raised the alarm, then, finding the door open, entered the shop and put the fire out himself.

Then he discovered two open trunks, and clothing scattered about.

The excited partners, Mitchelt and Moser, appeared presently, and discovered nearly $500 missing from one of the trunks.

Mitchelt accused Moser.

Moser was arrested but subseqeuntly exonerated.

Regrettably, the police never did find the culprit. But this was just a routine matter. Stabbings and shootings were not uncommon. Fights

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were a nightly occurrence, and often they were serious. This seaport town was "wide open."

Even at this distance, in time, the seriousness of a strike by the disgruntled police can be realized. However, they were persuaded to remain on duty and The British Colonist helped them get redress.

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THERE WAS ANOTHER situation in which the newspaper was deeply interested. Amor de Cosmos, its editor and publisher, had progressive ideas about free education.

New settlers, he argued, were coming in at a fair pace, and many of them had children.

"Is it not important that we begin to think of some scheme of national education? Other British colonies have won honorable distinction for themselves by the careful provisions made for the training of youthful colonists. And though our population is sparse out of Victoria, now is the time deliberately to frame a common school system that should be capable of expansion and extension as the country fills up."

He acknowledged the praiseworthy effort of the Victoria Colonial School, but showed its inadequacy. Free schools were what the colony required.

"We are aware that the system is met by the objection that childless men are made to assist in educating the children of other people. . . . But this objection grows out of a very limited view of the subject. Every man . . . has a deep interest in the question, whether the children of his neighbors are to grow up ignorant and vicious or intelligent and virtuous. The value of property is regulated by the intelligence of the population . . ."

There were several private schools in operation, and Rev. W. F. Clarke, that February, was advertising a new academy, "for young ladies and gentlemen." They would be given a thorough English education and "the morals of the pupils will be assiduously watched."

His fee was $10 a quarter, payable in advance.

THE OUTCRY against the so-called "mule tax," against which de Cosmos had been outspokenly severe, had found another champion in W. J. McDonald, the member of the legislative assembly for Sooke.

This tax was another of the "proclamation" laws which Governor Douglas had thrust upon the colony of British Columbia, which he governed concurrently with Vancouver Island. The charge was $5 for every mule load of supplies going up-country from Fort Douglas or Yale.

Mr. McDonald wrote in expostulation to His Excellency.

From the governor's private secretary, Charles Good, he got a formal reply: "I am directed by His Excellency . . . so far from entertaining the alarm you express on the subject (he), is firmly persuaded that the measure will be attended with the happiest effects, both to the merchant and the miner, and will prove of the greatest benefit by the reduction of the cost of transport consequent on the improvement of communications.

"His Excellency would also remark that the measure in question has been well considered, and is not only indispensable to the prosperity and development of the country, but is desired beyond all other measures by the miners and merchants of upper British Columbia."

This last was pure poppycock, for miners and merchants alike were adamant in their refusal to entertain such a tax for a moment.

Amor de Cosmos, of course, took issue immediately. The only tax to which the up-country people would agree, he said, was a small toll, as on a turnpike, and then only "when the trails were put in good condition."

Even if Yale would accept the tax, how could it be justified when the Yale merchant paid only a $3 tax for a ton of freight coming up-river, and the man on the next bar above would pay an additional $50.

"The proclamation takes this absurd position," said de Cosmos, "and charges the packer to Boston Bar, 50 miles, the same as to Quesnel(le) River, 240 miles . . ."

And these charges were proposed. $5 a mule load, for travelling trails the people had constructed by voluntary contribution!

The tax was never collected, although Douglas refused to repeal the law.

CAUSE for PRIDE

THE CITIZENS of Chemainus pride themselves on a number of things, but one in particular: their keen and efficient volunteer fire department.

The 23-member Chemainus Volunteer Fire Department is one of the best-equipped, most efficient, and has one of the best records among the volunteer brigades in B.C.

They boast a modern firehall with ample room for equipment and complete with recreation room. Their up-to-date machinery includes two fully equipped fire trucks and ambulance, and they are now raising money to equip and outfit a team of frogmen for salvage and rescue work.

Evidence of the excellent fire protection service the Chemainus Fire Department is providing is seen in the low fire insurance rates charged in Chemainus. Chemainus citizens pay considerably less than those in many neighboring communities.

In addition to stressing constant training on the part of its members, the Chemainus brigade also emphasizes public education.

In this connection, Chemainus Volunteer Fire Department is currently sponsoring a Junior Firemen's Training Program.

A total of 27 lads ranging in age from 13 to 19, are enrolled in a 19-week training program that will see them emerge as fully trained junior firemen.

The young lads are being trained at the firehall every Sunday morning by members of the Chemainus brigade who are giving up their time from now until the end of May, when the comprehensive course ends, to work with the youngsters.

Purpose of the Junior Firemen's Program is twofold according to Fire Chief Ray Millard, himself a young man but in his eighth year as chief. "Firstly, by educating these lads in fire fighting, it will give us auxiliary firemen that will be available in emergency and for Civil Defence purposes. Secondly, we believe it will give the boys good, wholesome training and discipline and provide our department with reasonably well-trained future recruits."

The 19-week Junior Firemen's Training Program covers everything from community service to general safety.

The lads will receive instruction in first aid and will be taught all there is to know about hoses and how to use them under different circumstances. They will learn how to work with hydrants and pumps, how to use ropes and ladders and how to carry a person down a ladder. They will don smoke masks and go into a burning house and put out the fire. They will study salvage work and general safety practices.

One of the final phases of the progam will include on the spot work at a fire scene.

Firemen in charge of the various lectures are: First aid—Stan Best, Dick Stanton and F. Viala; Pumps — Lawson Mead, George Baird, Tommy Millard; Hose—Mickey Rubynuk, J. Webber, Fred Sketchley! Extinguishers — Gordon Ledingham, George Price, Elmer Haasanen, Ken Hatton; Ladders—William Fyffe, Greer, George Pedersen, R. Osborne; Ropes—Harry Chase, Dick Copper, Al Webber; Salvage—Ray Millard; Search and rescue — Gordon Ledingham; Ventilation — W. Fyffe; General safety—Ray Millard.

"We plan to give these lads a pretty comprehensive training course," Fire Chief Millard said, "and I think that by the time they are through, they will know a good deal about first aid and fire fighting and should make very good recruits."